

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 IO-13 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /079 W  
-----083043 181439Z /45

R 181015Z AUG 77  
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0450  
INFO AMEMBASSY DARESSALAAM  
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG  
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA  
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1908

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, BC  
SUBJECT: CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING SECRETARY TO CABINET STEENKAMP

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: POLITICAL RUMBLINGS CIRCULATING IN GABORONE DURING RECENT WEEKS INDICATE A CONTROVERSY BUILDING UP AROUND SECRETARY TO THE CABINET STEENKAMP, ONE OF PRESIDENT KHAMA'S CLOSEST ADVISERS AND THE MOST POWERFUL WHITE OFFICIAL IN BOTSWANA TODAY. END SUMMARY

2. STEENKAMP HAS RECENTLY BEEN ACCUSED BY SOME WITHIN THE GOB OF ATTEMPTING TO COVER UP A SHORTAGE OF RAND 400,000 IN THE NOW DEFUNCT (FOR SOME YEARS) BOTSWANA NATIONAL AIRWAYS (BNA). SHORTAGE WAS DISCLOSED IN JULY BY R.F.L.G. PEPPER, UK EXPATRIATE REGISTRAR OF COMPANIES IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. STEENKAMP'S EFFORTS TO QUASH AN INVESTIGATION ARE SAID TO HAVE CULMINATED IN PEPPER'S DISMISSAL FROM GOVERNMENT SERVICE. EXPLANATIONS OF STEENKAMP'S MOTIVES RANGE FROM INSISTENCE THAT SHORTAGE WAS AN ANCIENT ONE WHICH, UNDER CURRENT REGULATIONS, CAN NO LONGER BE IN-  
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VESTIGATED, TO ASSERTION THAT STEENKAMP WAS TRYING TO PROTECT DAVID MORGAN, FOUNDER OF BNA AND LONG-TIME FRIEND FROM DAYS WHEN STEENKAMP WAS FRANCISTOWN DISTRICT COMMISSIONER. MORGAN IS NOW REPORTEDLY IN JOHANNESBURG.

3. FIRING OF PEPPER PRECIPITATED RESIGNATION IN PROTEST OF COMMERCE MINISTER MMUSI AND THE GENERAL CABINET RE-

SHUFFLE IN JULY (SEE GABORONE 1534). RUMOR HAS IT THE CABINET AND OTHER HIGH GOB OFFICIALS HAVE TAKEN SIDES EITHER FOR OR AGAINST STEENKAMP. INCIDENTALLY, FINANCIAL ASPECT OF ISSUE IS NOT DEAD BECAUSE ALTHOUGH THE BNA IS DEFUNCT, CREDITORS ARE REPORTEDLY PRESSING TO THE TUNE OF RAND 400,000.

4. IT IS SAID THAT THE DOMESTIC OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE INSERTED THEMSELVES INTO THE STEENKAMP CONTROVERSY AND THAT A PUBLIC SHOWDOWN MAY COME DURING THE AUGUST 19 PARLIAMENTARY INTERROGATORY WHEN BOTSWANA PEOPLE'S PARTY LEADER PHILIP MATANTE (FRANCISTOWN) USES THIS ISSUE TO RESUME HIS AGE-OLD VENDETTA AGAINST STEENKAMP AND AGAINST MANY WHITES IN THE GOVERNMENT WHOM HE CALLS "PAPER CITIZENS". RUMOR HAS IT THAT MMUSI, NOW MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO ARM MATANTE WITH A COPY OF PEPPER'S REPORT ON THE SHORTAGE.

5. TO DATE NOTHING OF THIS INCIDENT HAS APPEARED IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN PRESS. W.H. NUSSEY, EDITOR OF ARGUS AFRICAN NEWS SERVICE AND A STEENKAMP FRIEND, TOLD UK HIGH COMMISSION OFFICER THAT STEENKAMP NOW SEES THE CONTROVERSY AROUND HIM AND DEEPLY REGRETS HIS ACTION IN FIRING PEPPER WITHOUT HAVING FIRST CLEARED THE STEP WITH PEPPER'S THEN BOSS, MINISTER MMUSI.

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6. COMMENT: AS INDICATED ABOVE, IF MATANTE ATTACKS, IT WON'T BE THE FIRST TIME THAT HE HAS HAD STEENKAMP AND, BY EXTENTION, OTHER WHITE GOB OFFICIALS (BOTH EXPATRIATES AND CITIZENS) IN HIS SIGHTS. HOWEVER, PRESIDENT KHAMA HAS ALWAYS SUPPORTED STEENKAMP TO THE HILT AND WE BELIEVE HE WOULD DO THE SAME NOW. WE HAVE HEARD THAT PUBLIC INFORMATION MINISTER KWELAGOBÉ IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE MATANTE'S QUESTIONS, POSSIBLY A CLEVER STEP BY KHAMA TO FORCE THE PUBLIC COMMITMENT OF KWELAGOBÉ TO THE PRO STEENKAMP CAMP.  
NORLAND

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009